IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A method of retrieving an image from at least one of an information-storage medium and an information network, said method comprising:

a) setting a retrieval request containing a degree of importance for a plurality of keywords by assigning a degree of importance to each keyword;

b) calculating a necessity signal for an image based on the retrieval request and <u>a number of</u> said plurality of keywords, each of said plurality of keywords being tagged to the image; and

c) searching for the image from at least one of an information-storage medium and an information network and displaying the image, based on the necessity signal.

2. (Previously presented) The method of retrieving an image as defined in claim 1, wherein each keyword is classified into a class and each class comprises a plurality of keywords.

3. (Previously presented) The method of retrieving an image as defined in claim 1, wherein the image is displayed in order of priority of the degree of importance.

4. (Currently amended) An apparatus for retrieving an image from at least one of an information-storage medium and an information network, said apparatus comprising:

a) a menu entry section that allows an user to set a retrieval request containing a degree of importance for a plurality of keywords by assigning a degree of importance to each keyword;

b) a retrieval section calculating a necessity signal based on the retrieval request and <u>a number of</u> said plurality of keywords, each of said plurality of keywords being tagged to <u>the</u> an image and searching for the image from at least one of an information-storage medium and an information network based on the necessity signal; and

c) a display section displaying the image output from the retrieval section according to the necessity signal.

5. (Previously presented) The apparatus for retrieving an image as defined in claim 4, wherein each keyword is classified into a class and each class comprises a plurality of keywords.

6. (Previously presented) The apparatus for retrieving an image as defined in claim 4, wherein the image is displayed in order of priority of the degree of importance.

7. (Previously presented) The method of retrieving an image as defined in claim 2, wherein the degree of importance of the image is evaluated according to a degree of necessity by each class for the image.

8. (Previously presented) The apparatus for retrieving an image as defined in claim 5, wherein the degree of importance of the image is evaluated according to a degree of necessity by each class for the image.

9. (Previously presented) The method for retrieving an image as defined in claim 7, wherein:

the degree of importance by each class is obtained depending on i) a first value having a larger value as a number of the tags tagged to the image increases, ii) a second value having a larger value as a number of the tags tagged to the image decreases, and

contributions of the first value and the second value to the degree of importance by each class are determined by a number of non-zero components of a retrieval request signal by each class.

10. (Previously presented) The apparatus for retrieving an image as defined in claim 8, wherein:

the degree of importance by each class is obtained depending on i) a first value having a larger value as a number of the tags tagged to the image increases, ii) a second value having a larger value as a number of the tags tagged to the image decreases, and

contributions of the first value and the second value to the degree of importance by each class are determined by a number of non-zero components of a retrieval request signal by each class.

11. (Previously presented) The method for retrieving an image as defined in claim 9, wherein:

when the number of the non-zero value is larger than a first predetermined value, the first value mainly contributes to the degree of importance by each class;

when the number of the non-zero value is smaller than the first predetermined value, the second value mainly contributes to the degree of importance by each class; and

which of the first value and the second value mainly contributes to the degree of importance by each class changes with rapidity determined by a second predetermined value in a neighborhood of a point that the number of no-zero components equals the first value.

12. (Previously presented) The apparatus for retrieving an image as defined in claim 10, wherein:

when the number of the non-zero value is larger than a first predetermined value, the first value mainly contributes to the degree of importance by each class;

when the number of the non-zero value is smaller than the first predetermined value, the second value mainly contributes to the degree of importance by each class; and

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which of the first value and the second value mainly contributes to the degree of importance

by each class changes with rapidity determined by a second predetermined value in a neighborhood

of a point that the number of no-zero components equals the first value.

13. (Previously presented) The method of retrieving an image as defined in claim 2,

wherein the image is displayed in order of priority of the degree of importance of the image.

14. (Previously presented) The apparatus for retrieving an image as defined in claim 5,

wherein the image is displayed in order of priority of the degree of importance of the image.

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